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Labaree, Benjamin, Rev.

Historical address of the ded-  
ication of a monument in  
Charlestown, N. H.

Boston, 1870





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# HISTORICAL ADDRESS

AT THE

## DEDICATION OF A MONUMENT

IN

CHARLESTOWN, N. H.

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BY REV. B. LABAREE, D. D., LL. D.

LATE PRESIDENT OF MIDDLEBURY COLLEGE, VERMONT.

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IN EXCHANGE

*Profrat. Union*

CHARLESTOWN, N. H., September 29, 1870.

Rev. BENJAMIN LABAREE, D. D.

*Dear Sir,*—The undersigned having heard with great pleasure the historical address delivered by you in the South Parish Church on the 30th ultimo, would respectfully and earnestly request a copy of the same for publication.

Very truly your obedient servants,

GEORGE OLCOTT,  
CHARLES C. KIMBALL,  
LIVINGSTON STONE,  
BENJAMIN WHIPPLE,  
JOHN M. GLIDDEN.  
LEVI WILLARD,  
H. H. SANDERSON,

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WEST ROXBURY, October 3, 1870.

GEORGE OLCOTT, CHARLES C. KIMBALL, and others.

*Gentlemen,*—Your note of the 29th ultimo, requesting for publication a copy of the historical address which I delivered in Charlestown on the 30th of August, is received. The discourse was written in haste and with no view to publication, but if in your judgments the perusal of it will give pleasure or instruction to the people of Charlestown or to others, I will place the manuscript at your disposal. I shall take the liberty, however, to make a few slight alterations.

I am, Gentlemen,

Respectfully your ob't serv't,

B. LABAREE.



## INTRODUCTORY NOTE.

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Few towns in New England had a more eventful experience in their early settlements than Charlestown, and therefore it is not a little surprising that no complete history of the town has ever been written. The "*Annals of Charlestown*," by the late Rev. Dr. Crosby, is a valuable collection of materials for the historian, arranged in chronological order, and it claims to be nothing more. Other brief sketches of the town have been made, but they all come far short of full and well digested history. The little book known as "*Mrs. Johnson's Captivity*," published more than half a century ago, contains many interesting and stirring facts pertaining to the early history, and facts that made a vivid impression upon the minds of a large number of readers when first published; and as successive editions have been printed, fresh interest has been awakened with a few. But as time rolls on, the number of persons familiar with the hardships and sacrifices of the early settlers has been gradually diminishing, until, at the present day, it is feared that to some those trials are wholly unknown, and to many others only imperfectly understood, through the uncertain teaching of tradition.

The lovers of Romance, engrossed with their favorite authors, seem to suppose, that in the sober realities of history, there is nothing worthy of their attention. But if striking incidents, marvellous occurrences, sanguinary battles, personal bravery, devoted patriotism and hair-breadth escapes, constitute the main attractions of romantic fiction, these qualities are incorporated with the early history of our country, and especially with that of Charlestown. And whether the truths of history and of our own history, too, are more important for

the young, and for all, than the creations of fancy, need not be discussed.

Some of the relatives and descendants of Mrs. Johnson, and of her fellow captives, concluded to erect a monument in memory of their sufferings and virtues, hoping that it would at the same time, awaken an interest in local history, and prove a perpetual memento to all observers, of the conflicts, the trials, and the manly character of the early settlers. To promote this object still further, it was thought desirable that, at the dedication of the monument, a Discourse should be delivered on the early history of the town. Hence the following Address, prepared by request, for the occasion.

The day selected for the services was the 30th of August, the anniversary of the captivity. The weather proved highly propitious, and the citizens of Charlestown gave the best evidence of their interest in the questions of the day, by assembling in large numbers. The occasion also drew many from the adjoining towns, and a few from a great distance. The audience room of the church, (the Unitarian,) the gallery and vestibule, were filled to overflowing. The Rev. Mr. Chapin, missionary from China, and the Rev. Mr. Cobb, of Springfield, Vt., conducted the devotional exercises, and excellent music from the organ, and by the choir of the church, was listened to with great pleasure.

## A D D R E S S .

*Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen :*

We live in an age of monuments. Individuals and families, battles and revolutions, are commemorated, not only by appropriate addresses, but by the erection of some suggestive and durable structure. It may take the form of a church or a hospital ; it may appear as a memorial hall, or as a literary institution. To commemorate the character and worth of a beloved minister, an affectionate people place a tablet in the wall of the church ; and friends, desiring to perpetuate, in a durable form, the memory of friends and relatives, erect a marble slab or shaft, with suitable inscriptions. Thus the affectionate heart, the appreciative understanding, filial reverence, and a sentiment of justice, may all find expression in the acts of devotion to friends and benefactors of a past age.

In this tendency of the public mind, there is a deep significance ; it must have its origin in some settled conviction of truth and duty. A charitable interpretation would divest it of all selfish ends, and give it this broad and liberal construction, viz. : It looks to the past, and desires to do justice to the brave, the good, and to those who endured hardships and privations in procuring the blessings which we enjoy ; it contemplates the present, and would impress upon the minds and hearts of the young, sentiments of respect and reverence for the men and the women who braved the dangers of forest, field and flood, for the good of their posterity ; it forecasts the future, and endeavors to transmit to coming ages, a knowledge of important characters and events in a manner more impressive and enduring than is usually done on paper or parchment.

Men and events partially forgotten, are, in this age of monumental renown, brought forth from their long oblivion, and presented to the world for recognition and admiration. This seeming love of the past cannot be mere affectation; it is not confined to our own people, whose whole history, ancient and modern, is comprised within the brief period of three hundred years; but among nations that can boast of an antiquity worthy of the name, the same spirit of research among the records of antiquity, for the purpose of rendering due honor and praise to national benefactors, is sometimes exhibited in a striking manner. Let me give a single instance by way of illustration: One thousand years ago, what is now the kingdom of Norway, consisted of small provinces and petty estates, which, in 872, were, by the wisdom and valor of a powerful chief, reduced to complete unity, and made a strong kingdom, recognized and respected by the other nations of Europe. His name was Harald Haarfagar, or Harald of the Fair Hair. Nearly one thousand years have elapsed, and no public monument has been erected to commemorate that epoch in Norway's history, or to do honor to the brave hero and national benefactor; but in this age of active reminiscences, the long neglected duty is to be performed. Preparations are now in progress for constructing a fitting testimonial which shall proclaim to the present and the future, the debt of gratitude due to the chieftain by whose heroism Norway became a united and prosperous nation. In 1872, a monument will be completed on the shore of that kingdom, and combining historical allusions, grateful recollections and public utility, will take the form of a *lighthouse*, and thus, while it guides mariners in the navigation of a dangerous coast, it will, at the same time, transmit to all coming ages, the brave exploits and prudent counsels of Harald of the Fair Hair.

Indeed, this ready disposition to do honor to the past, cannot be claimed as a characteristic of our times, though it is especially developed and made more diffusive in the present age. We do not admit that kings and statesmen, chieftains and soldiers, are the only persons whose services and exploits are worthy of remembrance; nor should rulers and nations alone be allowed to honor and perpetuate such services. In a less public and more quiet way, friends may pay their respects to friends, relatives to

relatives, townsmen to townsmen. Nor are subjects for such commemoration wanting ; almost every frontier settlement in the country will furnish them.

The history of this town is fruitful in characters and incidents, worthy of special remembrance. It is not my purpose to recite to you the early history of Charlestown. I propose only to pass in review some of the incidents and characters which gave that history peculiar prominence among the towns in this vicinity. For many years Charlestown was a frontier settlement, the outpost of civilization, the battle-field of the English, the French and the savage. Frontier homes, forest life, and almost perpetual wars, must necessarily develope characters, and create stirring incidents, that could hardly be dreamed of in the quiet times of peace, and in the affluent homes of luxury. Important issues were depending upon the success or failure of this enterprise at No. 4. The people, indeed, pursued their avocations, or defended their homes as ordinary duties imposed by the peculiarities of the times, or the necessities of their condition, not probably perceiving that they were engaged in the solution of important political and social problems of great interest to mankind. Yet in this remote settlement, and in these strange conditions of life, they were aiding to work out results destined to produce effects upon kingdoms and continents, even upon the future character and progress of civil society.

Four great nations of Europe had planted colonies in North America : the Spaniards in the remote South, the Dutch in New York, the British on a broad belt along the Atlantic coast, extending from the possessions of the Spaniards on the South, to those of the French on the North. The French were in possession of the extreme North, and of the far distant South West, and they claimed all the intermediate territory extending in a broad semi-circle, from Nova Scotia to the St. Lawrence, up that river to the great lakes, through the wilderness, to the Mississippi, thence down to the Gulf of Mexico. To make good their claims, they had erected at distant intervals, forts and stockades, with the purpose of defending to the utmost these wide domains, against all adverse claimants. The Spaniards and the Dutch were less ambitious of conquest, or less able to extend their settlements over the continent, and the controversy



became more active and determined between two mighty nations, rivals by position, and enemies by inheritance. The English, claiming the territory, were determined to push their settlements westward indefinitely, and at the same time to extend and defend their frontier settlements in New England. The French were not less resolute in maintaining their ground, determined to arrest the further extension of the British Colonies, and hoping even to drive them back into the Atlantic Ocean. Each nation was eager to occupy new territory, to form settlements, and by thus enlarging its domains, to strengthen the foundations, and add to the dignity of the Imperial Government at home. The good of the Colonies, we fear, was not so much at heart, as were the honor and advantages of the home governments. These nations had for centuries been accustomed to meet in deadly strife, on the battle-fields of the old world; now they meet in less conspicuous, but not less sanguinary encounter in this western wilderness. The guerdon of victory is not a village or a town, or a single city, but a *continent*. To all appearance the advantage is with the French. Entrenched for more than a century in their strongholds, accustomed to the wild and irregular warfare of the mountain and the forest, stimulated by religious zeal against the enemies of their country and the heretics of their church, they hoped to make an easy conquest of the small bands of emigrants scattered through the wilderness. Then they had under their political and ecclesiastical control, a vast number of savage warriors, who only needed the motives of gold and plunder, whiskey and tobacco, to post them forth in any direction, on an expedition of blood and carnage. As many of them had in form, adopted the Roman Catholic faith, the ardor of religious fanaticism came in to intensify the natural ferocity of the savage. The priest blessed the Indian's tomahawk and scalping-knife, and bade him God-speed in the work of destroying heretics. Even crowned heads and royal hands urged on the savage in the work of death. An Indian, whose hands were deeply dyed in the blood of the English colonists, crossed the ocean, and was honored by an interview with the king. Raising his hand, he thus commended himself to the favorable regard of his majesty: "This right hand alone has slain one hundred and fifty of your majesty's enemies in New England." And the

appeal was successful. In token of approval and admiration, the French monarch conferred on the murderer the order of knighthood, and endowed him with a pension for life.

The number of English people on the continent was indeed much larger than that of the French, but they were settlers and citizens, not warriors; they lived in families, not as solitary priests and soldiers; they were scattered far and wide through the land, not cooped up in forts military and ecclesiastical, and they were obliged to cultivate the fields for subsistence, with few walls or defences for the protection of their families. Not soldiers by profession or by choice, but by a stern necessity; united by no political or ecclesiastical bond, they came to seek a quiet home for themselves and their posterity. But by incessant inroads upon their villages, by the murder or captivity of their relatives and friends, the war lion within them was at length fairly aroused. While the French believed that there could be no peace in the land so long as the English were in it, the latter were as confident that there would be no rest for them until Canada should be conquered. Under the impulsive force of this conviction, the colonists addressed themselves to the task with united feelings and unwavering purpose. And though often perplexed, and sometimes defeated, they toiled and suffered and fought, until Canada was annexed to the British Crown.

Nor was it a question merely of pride or of prejudice. At the foundation of the strife there lay principles of the highest importance. On the surface, the controversy appeared in this form—"Shall Great Britain or France bear rule over these broad realms in North America?" But a little penetration could discover the question assuming a different shape, viz: "Shall the Saxon or the Celtic civilization impress itself upon the people of this land?" And viewing the subject from a religious standpoint, it would be expressed thus: "Shall the religion of the Pope, or the religion of Protestants, be the rule of thought and of action for the teeming population yet to spread over the surface of the New World."

Such were some of the great moral and political problems connected with the early settlement of this country, and in the solution of these problems the first settlers of Charlestown were called to bear a part. Probably there was no place in New

Hampshire, certainly none on Connecticut River, in which were concentrated so many public and social interests, as in the middle of the last century clustered around this little spot called No. 4. Those times demanded men of lofty patriotism, of unflinching purpose, of patience in suffering, of fearlessness in danger; and the circumstances developed the men who were equal to the demand, and they deserve our grateful recognition and most respectful regards. Are heroes worthy of our remembrance? There were men here whose abilities in councils of war, or wisdom in councils of state, and whose achievements, both in civil and military life, were equal to those of multitudes who have been celebrated in story and in song. Are great battles worthy the encomiums of the orator, or the praises of the minstrel? There was a conflict of arms here of several days' duration, not indeed distinguished for the numbers engaged, nor for the previous fame of the opposing commanders, but for coolness and courage on the part of the American captain, for sleepless vigilance and military skill, for untiring devotion to duty, and calm intrepidity in the face of appalling dangers, it is surpassed by few of the great battles that have excited the admiration of the world. Does this eulogy seem too highly colored? Let me then justify it by a brief recital of the facts. The thickening dangers from Indian depredations, had driven all the inhabitants from the town; the soldiers had been ordered to abandon the fort, and for many months not a solitary human being remained in the place. It seemed as if the progress of British settlements must be arrested, and the territory on the Connecticut abandoned to the French. But the Governor of Massachusetts determined to make one more effort to save the place and territory to the British crown, and accordingly he commanded Captain Phineas Stevens to march immediately to No. 4, with a company of thirty men, and take possession of the fort. The order was promptly obeyed, and on the 27th of March, 1747, Stevens entered the fort with his little garrison, and, as the event proved, he came none too soon. In less than ten days after his arrival that little stockade fortress was surrounded by an army of excited warriors, French and Indian, and variously estimated from 400 to 700. Fearful odds—30 to 700; *one* to 23; or at the lowest estimate, *one* to 13; or if we combine the numbers and take the



medium, *one* to 18, and such enemies! Some, well-trained French soldiers, long accustomed to war, but the larger part wild, infuriated savages, whose grotesque appearance and terrific war-cry, and well-known habits of cruelty, had often sent chills of terror to the stoutest hearts. And what were the defences of that little band against such deadly foes and these formidable numbers? I can no where find a particular description of that structure called a fort, but it must have been a common stockade, consisting of poles or trunks of trees, about fourteen feet long and ten or twelve inches in diameter, with one end in the ground, and all united firmly together, and thus enclosing a space, it is said, of three-fourths of an acre. And this frail structure, united with personal valor, and resolute purpose, was all that protected thirty men against six or seven hundred. But the little citadel was closely invested, a simultaneous attack was made on all sides, under the command of an experienced leader, Gen. Debeline. Stevens and his brave little army sustained the shock unharmed and unintimidated. Says the valiant captain in his report: "The wind being very high, and everything exceeding dry, they set fire to all the old fences, and also to a log house about forty rods distant from the fort, to the windward, so that in a few minutes we were entirely surrounded by fire—all which was performed with the most hideous shouting from all quarters, which they continued in the most terrible manner till the next day at ten o'clock at night, without intermission, and during this time we had no opportunity to eat or to sleep. But notwithstanding all their shoutings and threatenings, our men seemed to be not in the least daunted, but fought with great resolution, which undoubtedly gave the enemy reason to think that we had determined to stand it out to the last degree."

As the fort did not take fire from the burning huts, barns and fences, the enemy discharged burning arrows, that they might give a permanent lodgment to the fire in the combustible material of the fort. If the mode of assault was peculiar, the manner of defence was not the less so. The soldiers dug deep trenches beneath the stockade, through which they passed with buckets of water, and extinguished the flames as they caught. Fruitful in expedients, skillful and resolute in applying them to practice, that miniature army were prepared at all points, and

for any emergency. Nor was the invading foe destitute of resources. French ingenuity devised a wheel carriage which was filled with faggots, and various combustibles, and when well on fire, was propelled towards the fort with the purpose of accomplishing what burning arrows had failed to do. It was an instrument before unknown in the enginery of war, but full of peril to the inmates of the fort. What must have been the feelings of that little company within their slight defences of timber so easily ignited, as they saw this moving mass of fire approaching for their destruction, accompanied as it was by the unearthly shrieks of the savages, and the triumphant shouts of Frenchmen, all anticipating an easy and certain victory. No reinforcements could be expected, no retreat was possible. Death seemed inevitable, and the alternative was given them, death by fire, or to surrender and meet death at the hands of inhuman barbarians, exasperated to the highest pitch of frenzy by the obstinacy of the defence, and by the loss of several of their number, who had fallen victims to the steady aim of the marksmen in the fort. Their last hope of life was in defeating the enemy.

Calm even in view of tortures and death, Capt. Stevens directed the mode of defence, animated his men by his own personal valor, and sustained their hopes by an assured belief that they should achieve a victory. By such dauntless courage and military skill, united with the prompt obedience and untiring efforts of his brave men, this terrible assault by fire was also defeated, and the despondent enemy withdrew a little for consultation.

As the French General had exhausted his expedients for intimidation, he now has resource to negotiation, and invites Capt. Stevens to an interview. Stevens listens courteously while Debeline assures him that he had *seven hundred men* under his command; that they had become impatient and exasperated at the obstinate defence, and if by further resistance, he should be compelled to storm the fort, it would be followed by the frightful massacre of the whole garrison. Stevens heard it all, and then, with Spartan brevity and coolness, replied, "*I can assure you, Sir, that my men are not afraid to die.*"

Strange that the Frenchman should have supposed that high sounding words and vaporizing threats, would intimidate the man

whom musket balls and burning arrows, and brandished tomahawks, and fire and faggots, had failed to move. Capt. Stevens and his band of heroes remained undaunted, while the enemy renewed the attack with fresh vigor and determination, and persevered in their purpose for three days longer, but all in vain. Savage ferocity and French ingenuity were alike baffled by the cool courage and steady resistance of the garrison, and the disheartened foe now proposes to abandon the siege and return to Canada, provided the commander of the fort would sell them provisions for the journey. Stevens instantly rejected the proposal, but offered to give them five bushels of corn for every prisoner they would return from captivity, but they must leave with him hostages for the faithful fulfillment of the contract. These terms were not acceptable to the French General, and soon this formidable host, so sanguine of success, and so boisterous in their demonstrations a few days before, suddenly broke up their camp, fired a parting salute in honor of the brave little garrison, and took up their line of march for their homes in the Northern forests. To convince the retreating foe that they were neither exhausted in courage or ammunition, the Spartan band returned the salute with a hearty good will.

In this conflict many of the assailants were slain, how many is not known; of the garrison, none were killed, and only two slightly wounded. We are full in the belief that this remarkable event has not received the prominent place in history, to which it is fairly entitled. Leonidas, with an army of 7,000, defended the Straits of Thermopylæ against the countless hosts of Xerxes, until the enemy, by the aid of a traitor, found access to his rear, and completely encompassed him; then, disdaining to surrender, he, with his Spartan band of 300, plunged into the midst of the Persian host, and sold their lives at the dearest rate. This event, so celebrated in history, derives its chief lustre from the self-sacrifice of that band of heroes on the altar of their country. Except for that self-immolation, I cannot see that the prowess of Leonidas and his three hundred is worthy of higher admiration than that of Stevens and his thirty.

Only seven years later than this event at No. 4, an encounter took place in our own country, west of the Alleghany mountains, in which George Washington bore a conspicuous part. He was

then colonel of a regiment of the Provincial troops of Virginia, having under his command 400 men. By a force of 1,600 French and Indians, he was driven into Fort Necessity, a stockade defence probably quite similar to that which Stevens defended. Washington and his men fought bravely, but the disparity in numbers was great, four to one, and his defences frail; he, therefore accepted honorable terms of capitulation, surrendered the fort, and led his men back through the wilderness, to Virginia. Stevens with odds against him as 18 to 1, and with defences equally frail, resists all attacks, all military devices, all overtures for surrender, and compels his enemy to abandon his purpose, and retreat through the wilderness.

The immediate visible effects of the conflict were a triumphant garrison on the one side, and a disappointed, discomfited enemy on the other; but there were results connected with it which the eye could not see, which the wisest statesman of that period could not anticipate. Had the French succeeded it is quite probable that they would have pursued the work of conquest down the river, until they had driven the British settlers from the valley of the Connecticut. Other invasions and still more formidable armies would have been organized in the French territory for the conquest of New England. But when it was borne on the wings of the wind, through the French settlements and among the Indian tribes, that *thirty men* had for days and nights successfully resisted the military devices, the combined skill, and the united assaults of *seven hundred* French and Indians, they would come to the conclusion that these Englishmen were not easily conquered. Who can tell then, whether, on the issue of that siege, may not have depended the great question, Whether the French or the English should be masters of this country? No one well read in the history of those times, will regard such a supposition as chimerical or improbable.

The abilities for military command, disclosed in that critical emergency, would, in these days, have procured for Capt. Stevens the shoulder-straps of a Major-General. At the time his services were appreciated by some, and especially by Sir Charles Knowles, a British naval officer then at Boston. In token of his admiration of cool courage and dexterous methods of defence, he presented Capt. Stevens with an elegant silver-hilted sword,

and for this noble act of Sir Charles, your town received the name of Charlestown. Now is it not a little singular that the name of him who could appreciate and admire the valorous deeds of the commander of that fort, is perpetuated in the name of your town, while he who performed the deeds which excited the admiration, has not even a tablet to tell to posterity the story of his brave defence? In this age of monuments and memorial halls, to those who deserved well of their country for bravery and self-sacrifice, do not gratitude and simple justice require that the name of Stevens should be remembered? Citizens of Charlestown, may a native of your town remind you, that in April, 1872, will occur the 125th anniversary of that important crisis in the history of this place, and may he suggest without offence, that measures should be taken to do honor on that occasion, to Capt. Stevens and his brave associates, who, by their patriotic ardor, patient endurance, and courageous bearing, delivered your town from the presence of a horde of murderous savages, and drove them back to their homes in the northern wilderness.

Other personages and other incidents in the early history of this town, are not unworthy of commemoration. Severe trials and hardships await all emigrants who transfer their homes from the comforts and privileges of civilized life, to the wildness and roughness of the forest. Sufferings are expected, and can in a measure be provided for and mitigated; but when war, and war by ferocious savages, is added to the cup of sorrow, the emigrant tastes the full bitterness of life's inheritance. From the time the first three families arrived at No. 4, in 1740, to the establishment of permanent peace, more than twenty years afterwards, a few intervals excepted, the settlers were in danger by night and by day, exposed to the tomahawk and scalping-knife of the Indian. When Nehemiah and his little band were engaged in re-constructing the walls of Jerusalem, their enemies determined to defeat the purpose by whatever means they could command, and thus made it necessary for the builders to be ever on their guard. "So," says Nehemiah, "with one hand we wrought in the work, and with the other we held a weapon." This finds a parallel in the early settlement of Charlestown. The enemy was ever at hand; the emigrant must be ready to repel him. The



farmer, while cultivating his little plat of ground, must have his trusty weapon by his side; the mechanic in his shop, kept his loaded musket at hand; a neighborly visit could not be made in safety, unless this common weapon of defence was a companion. Even when on the Sabbath, they repaired to the chapel for peaceful worship, the weapon of war must not be left behind. By day their path was beset by the murderous foe, and by night he lurked around their dwellings, seeking to gain access that he might plunder, capture or destroy. The savages were stimulated to deeds of barbarous cruelty by the hope of gain, for they well knew that prisoners and scalps would be purchased at a liberal price, by their allies and employers, the French.

But particular facts and occurrences will probably present a more vivid picture of the dangers of the people, and of the disturbed condition of society, than can be exhibited by general statements and descriptions. Among many incidents of trial and exposure from Indian warfare, one is recorded which to us might appear a little ludicrous, if it had not issued in a tragical result. It seems that matrons and their daughters, in those primitive times, were accustomed to milk the cows. This necessary domestic duty was sometimes attended with imminent danger, and therefore the courageous women must be protected in the service. Martial valor and a little courteous knight-errantry promptly devised a method of defence. Major Willard summons a company of soldiers, takes command in person, and proceeds to the farm-yard. What was the order of march we are not informed, but we can easily imagine it was that of a hollow square, the females in the centre, marching with measured tread, to the post of duty. But with some the inquiry will arise, why did not the men perform this important duty, and save their mothers and sisters from the toil and exposure? Two reasons may be assigned. 1. It was not the fashion of those times for men to milk. 2. The brave and resolute women of the period desired, in all suitable ways, to share the hardships and perils of border life with their husbands and brothers. They shrunk from no duty, they excused themselves from no feminine task, however trying, but were ready to face danger in all its forms, and thus encourage the sterner sex to fight valiantly in the cause of liberty and life. Shall they then surrender this

traditional and prescriptive privilege of woman to the inexperience and awkwardness of soldiers, because in the circumstances, it was difficult and hazardous? Womanly pride would repel and disdain the suggestion. They asked only to be protected.

The event justified the wisdom and foresight of Major Willard, in furnishing the milkmaids with a military escort, for this seeming comedy was suddenly changed to painful tragedy; the lurking foe was there, ambushed in the barn, awaiting the approach of the guard; from his concealment he fired, and Seth Putnam fell—the first martyr of Charlestown. The dangers of the Post continued to increase, and a company of cavalry was sent for the protection of No. 4, under Capt. Payne. A dozen or two of his men had the curiosity to see the place where Putnam was killed; they were rushed upon by the savages, who, from their hiding place, had been watching for the opportunity. Capt. Stevens from the fort, saw the danger, and with his men hastened to the rescue; a bloody battle followed, in which five were slain on each side; the Indians were defeated, but they carried into captivity one of the officers in command.

Wars, however, were not the only source of terror to these early settlers; "rumors of wars" were often as trying and terrific as the sight of the actual conflict. Who could desire to reside in a community that could produce a record like the following, from Mrs. Johnson's narrative: "The Indians were reported to be on their march for our destruction, and our distance from sources of information, gave full latitude for exaggeration of news before it reached our ears. The fears of the night were horrible beyond description. While looking (by day) from the window of my log-house, and seeing my neighbors tread cautiously by each hedge and hillock, lest some secreted savage might start forth to take their scalp, my fears would baffle description. Alarms grew louder and louder, till our apprehensions were too strongly confirmed by the capture of a family on Merrimack River. Imagination now saw and heard a thousand Indians, and I never went round my own house without first looking, with trembling caution, by each corner, to see if a tomahawk was not raised for my destruction."

At this time it should be remembered, that the French and English were at peace, and yet scalps and prisoners found a

ready market in Canada. This hope of reward was the impelling force that moved the savages to continue their depredations upon the border settlements of New England. Again they visited No. 4, and another bloody tragedy followed. Lieutenant Moses Willard, Jr., with his son Moses, a lad of sixteen, went to a corn-field a few rods east of the present main street, to repair fence. A fatal shot from an unseen enemy, instantly killed the father. Seeing this the son ran for the fort, with two Indians in close pursuit, and such a race has seldom been witnessed. A rise of ground intervened; one of the savages vigorously pursued the lad in his own tracks, while the other ran round the hill to intercept him as he descended. As the youth rose the eminence the shaft of the pursuing foe lodged in his thigh, but did not bring him to the ground; perhaps it nerved him to desperate exertion, for he rushed onward, escaped both pursuers, and entered the fort bleeding and faint, with the arrow still adhering to the wound. That youth lived to advanced age, and raised a numerous family, of whom your fellow-citizen, Mr. Levi Willard, still survives.

Travelers who pass through your village, are accustomed to admire its quiet beauty, its peaceful repose along the banks of the Connecticut. This broad, extended street, these venerable, majestic elms, the tokens of comfort and refinement that meet the eye in every direction, all attract their attention, and call forth expressions of admiration. Among the many pleasant villages scattered along the Connecticut valley, Charlestown is placed in the foremost rank. But what a contrast between the aspects of the village and the state of society to-day, and its condition and appearance one hundred and twenty-six years ago. A young lady made a record of what she saw and heard on her first visit to Charlestown, in 1744. It is this:—

“When I approached the town the first object that met my eyes was a party of Indians holding a war-dance; a cask of rum, which the inhabitants had suffered them to partake of, had raised their spirits to all the horrid yells and feats of distortion that characterize the nation. I was chilled at the sight, and passed tremblingly by. At this time Charlestown contained nine or ten families, who lived in huts not far distant from each other. The Indians were numerous, and associated in a friendly manner with



the whites. It was the most northerly settlement on Connecticut River, and the adjacent country was terribly wild. A saw-mill was erected, and the first boards were sawn while I was there; the inhabitants commemorated the event with a dance, which took place on the new boards. In those days there was such a mixture on the frontiers, of savages and settlers without established laws to govern them, that the state of society cannot be easily described. The inhabitants began to erect a fort, and took some steps towards clearing their farms, but war checked their industry."

From the facts and statements which we have given as specimens of emigrant life in the forest, we can form only an imperfect idea of the privations and sufferings, the daily solitudes and protracted hardships of the men and women who laid the foundations of civil institutions in these frontier settlements. The liveliest imagination can scarcely form a picture of sorrow and suffering that shall exceed the realities of authentic history. It is well, occasionally, to recall these events, to review the circumstances and conditions of the early life of our forefathers, that we may the better appreciate our peaceful homes and abundant privileges, and feel more impressively the debt of gratitude we owe them for suffering in our behalf. With these sentiments, a few of us have erected a monument to the memory of our ancestors, who bore a part in the trials of that period. We would hand down to the future some testimonial of our respect, some evidence of our high appreciation of their hardy enterprise, their fortitude in suffering, their faithful discharge of duties in circumstances of great difficulty and multiplied discouragements. Neither learning nor official station, neither distinguished services in military or civil life, nor wealth nor power, entitle them to any special honors at the hands of their posterity. They were plain, industrious citizens, who came into the wilderness that they might aid in subduing the forest, and planting the institutions of civil life, ready to do or to bear whatever duties or burdens divine Providence should impose upon them. The couplet of Pope expresses, in poetic phrase, an important truth, which finds many pertinent applications.

"Honor and shame from no condition rise,  
Act well your part, there all the honor lies."

*"Act well your part,"* in all circumstances and at all times, in private life, in public life, in civil life and in religious life. If this be the best criterion of character, the sure road to true honor, then are untitled men and women often worthy of more respect and grateful remembrance, than are many who have worn crowns and coronets. Many of the early settlers of this town were called to experience the full measure of savage ferocity. From the year 1746, to the final surrender of the province of Canada to the British in 1760, this town was exposed to the continual invasions of the Indians. During this period not less than thirteen or fourteen attacks were made; fifteen citizens were killed, and about thirty were carried into direful captivity. The event which we commemorate occurred on the 30th of August, 1754, and was a little distinguished from the other captures, by the number of prisoners taken, and by their prolonged and vexatious captivity. One whole family, parents and children, and one member from each of three other families, were in a moment swept from their homes and friends, and subjected to the control of pitiless barbarians. Scarcely had they entered the wilderness on their doleful and comfortless march, when their wretchedness was rendered yet more intense by the addition of another member to the family. The records of trials and privations, numerous as they are in this world of sorrow, can furnish but few instances in the absence of personal torture, that surpass in variety and intensity, the sufferings and hardships which these prisoners were called to endure for three or more wearisome years.

But who were the persons called to this heritage of suffering? The Johnson family constituted the larger part of the captives. James Johnson and his wife Susanna, their three children, Sylvanus, Susan and Polly, and Miriam Willard, sister to Mrs. Johnson, Peter Labaree and Ebenezer Farnsworth. Of the early history of James Johnson but little is known. A foreigner by birth, he emigrated to this country without parents or relatives, and was taken into the family of Col. Josiah Willard, whose niece he subsequently married. From Gov. Shirley he received the commission of Lieutenant. While residing in No. 4, he was for the most part engaged in trade; after his return from captivity he received a Captain's commission, and in 1758 was killed at the battle of Ticonderoga. But the central figure

in this group of captives, is preëminently and beyond doubt, Mrs. Susanna (Willard) Johnson. From whatever point of view we study her character, we discover the lineaments of a strong, decided, sensible woman. The education of those times was restricted to narrow limits—the manners of the age were somewhat different from the delicacy and refinement of the nineteenth century. Let each be judged by the standard of his own period. Few women have been called to experience trials and sufferings in greater variety or intensity, than those which fell to the lot of Mrs. Johnson, and fewer still have left such a record of patience, fortitude, and lofty feminine heroism, as an inheritance to their children. Her character and deeds create history; her graphic pen records it. That little book, though small, has produced a sensation in the world. It is a book of authority, is quoted freely by all who have attempted to write the history of Charlestown. Its statements have been called in question by some who cannot understand that truth is often stranger than fiction. Striking incidents now and then, are not unknown in the history of every person, but a succession of marvellous occurrences and strange adventures in the experience of the same individual, is quite uncommon. But the facts connected with the extraordinary history of Mrs. Johnson, are well attested by many who could speak from personal knowledge. Her power of physical endurance, her mental fortitude in the presence of crushing sorrows and afflictions, and the buoyancy of spirits which seldom forsook her, were known by her friends at the time, to be characteristics of the woman. In a discourse preached at her funeral, I find this sentence: "Her fortitude has been remarkable, and to this, under the providence of God, perhaps, may be imputed the preservation of her life through scenes the most unparalleled which history affords. Where one would have survived, it is more than probable that hundreds would have suffered death." The name of Phineas Stevens will go into history as the hero of No. 4. On the same page let the name of Susanna Johnson be written as the undisputed heroine of the place.

She was taken captive at the age of twenty-four. After her return from captivity, she resided most of the time in Charlestown, having married Mr. John Hastings; a daughter from this alliance, became the wife of Mr. Stephen Hassam. Mrs. Johnson

died in 1810, at the age of eighty years. The other captives all returned in due time. Miss Willard married a clergyman, who settled in Massachusetts. Sylvanus, the oldest child, and six years old at the time of the captivity, was absent nearly four years, most of the time among the savages. In this time he acquired a knowledge of the Indian language and forgot his own, and formed such an attachment to the simplicity of forest life, that it continued in full strength through all his days, and he died at the age of eighty-four. Says Dr. Crosby, "He retained to the hour of his death, many, if not most of the feelings and customs engrafted on his mind by his long residence with the aborigines." There are many similar instances of this kind of attachment, and they furnish an interesting problem for the solution of philosophers. How is it that three years of wilderness life effaced all impressions of the former six years, and produced habits of thought and feeling, and action, so deep and strong, that many years of subsequent life in the midst of the attractive appliances of civilization, were insufficient to counteract them? Three years of Indian life gain the mastery over eighty years among civilized men. Will the students of human nature give us an explanation of this remarkable fact?

Susanna, the oldest daughter, was the last of the family to return; she had seen but little of savage life, but had been well cared for, and politely educated by kind-hearted French ladies, and when she reached her family in 1760, was an accomplished young lady. She married Capt. Samuel Wetherbee, and became the mother of a numerous family. Polly married Col. Timothy Bedel of Haverhill. Captive, the little stranger who appeared in the wilderness, survived the roughness and wild surroundings of her early cradling, grew up to womanhood, and married Col. George Kimball.

The place from which this family was taken, was the north end of the street, on the east side, near the residence of Mr. Fish. Indeed, there are timbers in his dwelling, said to have been a part of the house from which the captives were taken.

It was early morning; a small gathering of friends the evening before, had indulged in water melons and exhilarating beverages that were not uncommon in those primitive times, and had prolonged their festivities to a late hour of the night, and in

consequence they would have extended their slumbers far into the day, had not a neighbor knocked at the door and aroused them from sleep. As the door was opened by Mr. Johnson to admit him, the Indians, hitherto concealed, rushed into the house and made prisoners of the family, and hurried them away. They made a slight halt to adjust their prisoners and plunder, on the low ground north-east of the place where Mr. John Dinsmoor's house stands; then, after a march of three miles, they halted again for breakfast. The exact place is still pointed out where these wretched captives partook of their first meal under the superintendence of Indian masters. We can well imagine that that sorrowful breakfast was in strange contrast with the festivities of the previous evening.

There were two other prisoners in this company, whom we have not yet noticed. Peter Labaree was of French extraction, descended from the Huguenots, who were driven from France, in the religious persecutions. His first home, in this country, was in Salem, Mass., where he married Ruth Putnam, and about the year 1750 migrated to No. 4, and pursued his trade as a carpenter. At an early hour on the 30th of August, 1754, he went to the house of Mr. Johnson, to perform some service in the way of his vocation, and was taken prisoner with the family. He was accustomed to keep a journal, in which some entry was made every day in the year, when circumstances would permit. After his return from captivity, he entered in that journal an account of his journey to Montreal, his treatment while there, up to the time of his final escape. He says they were carried northward about seven miles, then crossed the river, and set out for Crown Point. The second day they were detained about ten hours, by the illness of Mrs. Johnson; she was then put on horseback, and the journey continued over hills and mountains for several days, when they made a halt on the waters of Otter Creek. The Indians went out to hunt, for they had killed and eaten up the old horse, on which Mrs. Johnson rode over the mountains, and they were all beginning to be hungry. Having crossed the main stream of Otter Creek, by the Great Falls in Rutland, in a few hours they reached the Lake, and were received the next day by the French very kindly. Their next point was St. Francis, the home of the Indians. "Stayed here," says the



journal, "a few days, and then started for Montreal, and when arrived there I was sold for a slave. Went to the home of my new master, and he took me to the interpreter to tell me that he had bought me from the Indians, and to ask me if I was able to pay what he gave for me, which was 250 livres. I told him I could, if I could get word to my friends. After Mr. Johnson had permission to go home to obtain means to ransom himself and family, I went to my master and asked him how much I must pay for my ransom, and he said 500 livres. I told him that when I first came it was but 250, and now I had wrought for him three months it was double, and said I, what will it be if I stay a year, will it be 1,000? He said he could not tell. Then I thought I had better wait no longer, but embrace the opportunity and send for the money by Mr. Johnson.

"Soon after I drew a petition, asking the Secretary-General if I must pay the 500 livres, if it was according to the Christian law that a white man should be taken in peaceable times and sold as a slave. The General Secretary asked me to step into another room, and then said, 'Mr. Labaree, the Christian law is not in this country, but the Christian law of this country is what Mr. General says, that is the law here.'" Nothing was heard from Mr. Johnson for several months, and as the French supposed he did not intend to return, they treated the prisoners with great severity. "But," says the record, "he came at length and brought money to pay my redemption. After I had paid, and asked the liberty to be sent home, they immediately put Mr. Johnson into jail, and that put an end to our expectations for the present. And we were told that no such thing could be granted to us, for the Governor who gave Mr. Johnson the parole, had died during his absence, and with him had died the bargain. Thus our hopes were frustrated for the present, though they held out the promise until they had received our money, then told us we could not be sent till there came a flag of truce. So we were forced to content ourselves as well as we could, and that was but poorly, for, after so many trials and sufferings in this place, we are anxious to get away."

In such a state of mind, and after such repeated instances of injustice and insincerity on the part of the French, he very naturally concluded to take the matter into his own hands and

make his escape the first opportunity. It was a perilous undertaking. Albany, N. Y. must be the first point of his destination, and between that and Montreal, the place of his departure, there lay an interminable forest, traversed by mountains, intersected by rivers and abounding in swamps and morasses, difficult, if not impossible for a stranger to cross. It was also in early spring, when the streams were swollen by the rains and dissolving snow. The distance to Albany by the circuitous route he would be compelled to travel could not be much less than five hundred miles. Not a civilized man to give him food or fire or shelter, but most of the journey would lead through the territory of the Indian tribes who were ever ready to capture, to scalp and to kill the white man. The manifold hazards of the adventure were not unknown to him, but what shall he do? For almost three years he had been absent from his family, most of the time overtaken with labor, deceived, defrauded, and so far as he could see, this treatment and mode of life awaited him in future. This was a powerful repelling force urging him away; on the other hand, his wife and children needed his presence and were most anxious for his return, and this, added to the natural love of personal liberty, drew him towards home with a power that no common obstacles and no ordinary dangers could resist. Knowing full well the perils of the enterprise, he plunged into the forest, invoking the aid of Providence to direct his steps. He traveled for the most part by night, guided by the stars, and rested by day lest he should be discovered by the Indians; his food was roots and wild berries, and the uncooked flesh of such animals as missiles from the hand could subdue, for the discharge of his fowling piece might attract the attention of the savages, and was therefore seldom resorted to. Thus guided and sustained, he pursued his long wearisome journey through the forests to Albany, was conveyed thence to New York, and he finally reached his home in No. 4, early in the winter of 1757, after an absence of more than three years. In his *Annals of Charlestown*, Dr. Crosby says, "Mr. Labaree made his escape from Montreal, and after a long and tedious journey, during three days of which he traveled through a swamp to avoid discovery by the enemy, he arrived in New York nearly at the same time with the other prisoners." Mrs. Johnson says, "My

fellow prisoner Labaree had made his escape from the French and had been in New York a few days before on his way home." Mrs. Johnson arrived in New York from Montreal by way of England on the tenth of December, 1757.

Shortly after his return, Peter Labaree purchased a large tract of land about two miles north of this village, and about the year 1760 took possession, and was at the time the most northern settler on Connecticut River in New Hampshire. He raised a large family, three sons and five daughters, and their descendants, to the fifth and sixth generation, are found in several of the States, in Canada and in distant lands. He died in 1803 at the age of seventy-nine.

The other prisoner, Mr Ebenezer Farnsworth, reached home some time before the other prisoners, but the circumstances of his release and journey are not to my knowledge recorded. Three brothers by the name of Farnsworth, were the first settlers of Charlestown, from one of whom Ebenezer descended. He was thirty years of age at the time of his captivity, and after his return he settled on a farm in North Charlestown, where some of his descendants still reside. He died in 1794, aged seventy years.

Thus have we mentioned some of the facts connected with the captivity of our friends, and some of the trials and sufferings which they were called to endure, in variety and intensity not often surpassed. Trials and horrors of savage captivity; trials in the wilderness and on the water; trials of hunger, thirst and cold; trials in prisons, in slavery and constant fear from enemies, and trials of anxiety for absent friends, besides the nameless trials incident to their condition, which can neither be described nor classified. But in these most peculiar and afflicting circumstances, we are happy to know that they bore their deep sorrows and heavy burdens with resignation to the divine will, and addressed themselves to their new and strange duties with promptness and fidelity, though not, perhaps, at all times with cheerfulness. It has seemed to us a privilege to honor their memories in a durable form, to commemorate the manly and patient endurance of such unusual and complicated personal trials. Long since they passed from the honors of this world,



their work was done, their sufferings ended, and we trust they were admitted to those mansions in the skies, "where the wicked cease from troubling, and the weary are at rest."

At the close of the services in the church, the audience formed in procession, and, led by a band of music, moved to the cemetery, under the direction of J. G. BRIGGS, Jr., Esq., where a few additional remarks were made. Standing at the base of the structure, around which a large number of people were assembled, Dr. LABAREE spoke in substance as follows :

"My friends, you have gathered here, I suppose, to view the Monument, and to witness the ceremonies of the Dedication. You see before you, this plain, unpretending memorial,—and in forming your judgments of it you will please bear in mind the purpose for which it is intended. We present it as a testimonial of our respect and veneration for those relatives and friends, who were willing to brave the hardships and dangers of the wilderness, that they might change it into a garden, and establish the institutions of civilization and Christianity. We judged, therefore, that a Monument, plain and substantial, rather than ambitious and artistic, would best befit the persons commemorated and the object in view. We hope you will be able to pronounce it *appropriate*.

"The site will no doubt meet your approval. It is, you see, one of the most attractive spots in this beautiful cemetery, and we feel greatly indebted to the selectmen of Charlestown for their kindness and liberality in granting a location so desirable. Our first and strong impulse was to select a position near the place from which the captives were taken, but arguments for the public cemetery prevailed, and we are all well satisfied with our choice.

"Many of the persons interested in this Monument are strangers to most of the citizens of Charlestown, and they desire to express their thanks to those here who have aided in this enterprise. Mr. Levi Willard and Rev. Mr. Saunderson have rendered very important service in bringing the work to a consummation. Other individuals have kindly encouraged the object; and, to-day, many have expressed an unexpected and gratifying interest by assembling to listen to the recital of facts and events in the early history of the town. The

day, the occasion, the numerous audience, all tend to inspire us with the spirit of thankfulness. Our thanks are especially due to the church, which so generously granted us the use of its edifice, and to the choir for their very acceptable performances ; and we must not omit to thank the audience for their patient attention.

“ It is quite common, I understand, to *dedicate* Monuments ; and what is intended by such a ceremony ? In the minds of many, perhaps of most, the word *dedicate* has only a religious meaning, and refers to the act of consecrating a house of worship ; but it is used, also, with secular signification, and in this sense, means merely to point out the purposes for which the structure was intended, and the uses to which it may be applied. Now, our earnest wishes are—that this Monument may remind all who behold it, of the debt of gratitude they owe to those ancestors who voluntarily submitted to privations and severe hardships, for the benefit of their children and posterity—that it may excite a desire to become better acquainted with the facts and principles of our early history—and especially that it may awaken in the hearts of all, by suggesting the contrast between the present and the past, sentiments of gratitude to our Heavenly Father, for the blessings of peace and plenty, of civil society and good government, and the established institutions of education and religion. Thus it will become instructive, useful to mind and heart, and a constant reminder of our obligations to our Divine Benefactor. To these several purposes and good influences, we dedicate this Monument.”

The choir sung a stanza, the benediction was pronounced, and after the interchange of salutations and cordial greetings among friends, the audience gradually retired,











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